

THE PORT ARTHUR MASSACRE WAS MARTIN BRYANT FRAMED?

Martin Bryant was not the Port Arthur gunman, but he would have been abducted, drugged and transported to Seascope Cottage around the time of the massacre.

Part 3 of 3

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The set-up so far

In the first article in this series, it was shown that Martin Bryant could not have been the perpetrator of the horrendous massacre at Port Arthur on 28 April 1996 because his fingerprints and/or DNA were never found at the crime scene. Eyewitnesses also described a man who was not only much younger than but also differed from Bryant in several significant respects. The popular idea that eyewitnesses identified Bryant as the gunman is therefore a complete misrepresentation of the facts, as is the theory that he was a mind-controlled patsy. Quite simply, he wasn't even there.

Given that Bryant eventually pleaded guilty to all charges arising from the massacre, the question inevitably arises as to how this came about. Three factors made it possible for the Tasmanian state government to manipulate Bryant into pleading guilty.

First, Bryant is an individual of extremely low intelligence, with a mental age estimated to be that of an 11-year-old. He was therefore much less capable of realising that he was being set up than a person of average intelligence. This circumstance alone helps explain why Bryant, rather than someone else, was selected as the patsy.

Second, after being deprived of his liberty, Bryant was maintained in a condition of virtual solitary confinement for months on end. During this period, he was at the absolute mercy of his captors and their agents: police, lawyers, psychiatrists, doctors, nurses and security personnel. They could do with him whatever they wanted because very few members of the public, if any, cared what happened to him: the media had successfully persuaded them to believe that he was a monster, not worth an ounce of their pity.

Third, in order to prevent him from finding out the full extent of the crimes which were being attributed to him, Bryant was not allowed to watch TV, listen to the radio or read newspapers or magazines. His only potential sources of information about the massacre were his former girlfriend Petra Wilmott, who visited him once, and his mother, who visited him once every few weeks; however, neither was permitted to discuss the case with him. As late as 4 July 1995, Bryant was under the impression that the only charge against him was a single count of murder arising from the abduction of a male hostage: a lawyer from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, USA, whom he knew only as "Rick". This is simply astonishing because, by 4 July, at least officially, Bryant had been informed on no fewer than three prior occasions (1 May, 22 May and 14 June) that he had been charged with the murder of Kate Elizabeth Scott. Yet the transcript of the 4 July police interrogation makes it abundantly clear that this was the first occasion on which he grasped the fact that the murder charge had arisen from the death of a female. This finding inevitably raises questions as to whether Bryant was present (or, if he *was* present, whether he was conscious) during the three initial indictments.

In the second article in this series, the hypothesis was advanced that in the weeks prior to his 4 July interrogation, a concerted effort was made to implant false memories in Bryant's mind that would represent a first step towards having him accept responsibility for the Port Arthur murders. According to my hypothesis, psychiatrists would have told Bryant that he needed their help to reconstruct memories of his actions that he had blotted out due to trauma. The anticipated outcome was that Bryant would finally grow convinced that he had committed the crimes, even if he would have no idea why he would have done so. Fortunately for the Tasmanian Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), motive was irrelevant. In order to forestall a court trial, Bryant only needed to accept that he had committed the crimes; he did not also need to furnish a motive for having committed them.

The transcript of Bryant's 4 July police interrogation shows that the initial effort was successful enough: on this occasion, Bryant produced a narrative of participation in the carjacking of a BMW at the Fortescue Bay turnoff that was uncannily similar to that related over the phone to police negotiator Sgt Terry McCarthy by the enigmatic "Jamie", the spokesperson for the bizarre events at Seascope Guest House that followed on the heels of the massacre. Although the crime to which Bryant "confessed" was unconnected to the events at Port Arthur and almost certainly never took place in reality, Bryant's yarn was interpreted by the DPP as a confession to acts actually perpetrated at a *different* location by the *real* Port Arthur gunman, i.e., the carjacking and abduction of a male hostage that took place outside the Port Arthur General Store. By ignoring the details of Bryant's "confession", the DPP—Damian Bugg, QC—deceived Tasmania's Supreme Court by telling it that Bryant had confessed to the acts perpetrated by the *real* gunman.

However, at this early stage of the game, Bryant vehemently resisted the idea that he had perpetrated the murders at Port Arthur. He maintained that he had not even visited the Port Arthur Historic Site (PAHS) on the day in question, and he had difficulty understanding how the police had obtained a picture of a vehicle that seemed to be his own yellow Volvo parked at the PAHS toll gate when he only recalled driving past it. Clearly, a great deal of work remained to be done before Bryant could be made to confess to the shootings at Port Arthur.

Avery capers

Bryant's first lawyer, David Gunson, failed to make any headway in this respect, and on 30 September 1996 Bryant pleaded "not guilty" to all of the 72 charges against him. He did so "clearly and coolly".¹ Gunson resigned as Bryant's lawyer the very next day and refused to clarify his reasons to the media. The individual who rose to the task was John Avery, who had already been involved in the case as part of the police effort to frame

Hobart gun dealer Terry Hill for allegedly supplying Bryant with the weapons and ammunition used at Port Arthur. That Avery was waiting in the wings, ready to take over from Gunson, can be inferred from his presence in the courtroom when Bryant pleaded "not guilty". Avery met with Bryant for the first time the following day—the day that Gunson retired from the case.

Avery proved able to do in a month what Gunson had failed to do in five. On 7 November 1996, Bryant reversed his "not guilty" pleas and finally, on 22 November 1996, pleaded "guilty" 72 times. The fact that on the latter occasion Bryant tittered between his "guilty" pleas is a baffling circumstance that begs comparison with his previous experience on 30 September. On that occasion, Bryant entered "not guilty" pleas without any inappropriate

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noises, so it is extremely strange that Bryant apparently tittered while pleading "guilty". Since one would expect the opposite—that a mass murderer declaring himself "not guilty" might do so with a certain self-amusement—it is striking that Bryant apparently was more amused by the idea of pleading "guilty". Alternatively, he may have been trying to send the public a message: the sounds he made to accompany his "guilty" pleas may have been intended to help convey the message that his pleas were insincere and not to be taken at face value.

A further circumstance that invites concern is that, having pleaded "guilty" to all charges, Bryant was never escorted over the crime scene to verify that he had perpetrated the criminal acts to which he had "confessed".

As researcher Joe Vials pointed out: "Standard procedure in these circumstances is to take the suspect out to the crime scene and ask for details of exactly how he committed the crime(s), i.e., where each victim was standing, what sex, how many bullets, where the weapon was reloaded, etc., etc., all recorded on continuous (time-stamped) video. The Victoria Police Service observed this standard procedure meticulously in the case of Julian Knight at Hoddle Street during 1987, as did the New South Wales Police Service after a street shooting in Wollongong in 1998."² Such "walkthroughs" are a staple of modern criminological procedure and are invariably videotaped. Footage of this nature is often used in television crime programs, such as *Forensic Investigators* and similar American programs such as *Body of Evidence*. In short, Bryant has never corroborated his "guilty" pleas—a fact that makes them virtually worthless.

How did the turnaround come about in the space of about a month? Until recently, it has been impossible to do more than guess how Bryant was finally persuaded to plead "guilty" to all charges against him. All we have had to go by is a sequence of events that looks extremely suspicious: first, Bryant stunned the Tasmanian legal establishment by refusing to plead "guilty"; second, Bryant's first lawyer retired from the case; third, Bryant acquired a new lawyer, John Avery; and fourth, Bryant pleaded "guilty" a month later. Three



Lawyer John Avery, at his desk.
(Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 March 2006. Photo: Andrew Meares)

transcripts of conversations between Bryant and Avery, published by the *Bulletin* (4 April 2006), shed a great deal of light on the sudden transformation.³

The threat of a trial

However, before we discuss what can be learned from the *Bulletin*-published transcripts, it is important to emphasise that the first transcript supports the conclusion that the DPP was extraordinarily anxious to prevent a trial from being held:

Bryant: ...Mr B., do you know Mr B.?

Avery: I know Mr B., yes, and Mr D.

Bryant: Well, they are trying to brainwash me to not having a trial.

It is intriguing that the *Bulletin* has suppressed the names of the two individuals who, unacknowledged in any public source concerning the Port Arthur case, were clearly part of some irregular or extra-legal form of pressure being exerted on Bryant. (I know of no one involved with Bryant's case whose surname begins with "D". However, "Mr B." might well be Damian Bugg, QC.)

If Bryant were really guilty, there would seem no reason why a trial should not have been held. On the other hand, it would be consistent with the case that Bryant was set up that a trial be averted at all costs. Bryant clearly raised the stakes by pleading "not guilty" to all charges on 30 September 1996. At this stage, the DPP at least went through the motions of preparing for the possibility that there would be a trial, with a provisional date set for a first session on 18 November 1996.

Throughout October 1996, the DPP's focus was on strategies for controlling such a trial. One strategy was clearly to sift through the body of witness testimony and eliminate witnesses who posed a problem for the prosecution.

One witness scrubbed at this point was Wendy Scurr. Despite her status as one of the more high-profile witnesses, Scurr was sent a letter by the Office of the DPP, dated 15 October 1996, informing her that her witness testimony "will not be necessary in the trial of Martin Bryant". By far the most interesting part of this letter—which does not even consider the possibility that Avery might call her as a witness for the defence—is a passage in which Scurr was warned against speaking to the media prior to the trial:

"Because you are not called as a witness it does not mean that you can freely discuss issues in a public way. We would be most concerned if there was any inappropriate pre-trial publicity about this matter. We would ask that you exercise caution if you are approached by any representative of the Media as it would be unfortunate indeed if the trial process was in any way delayed or complicated through inappropriate pre-trial discussions."⁴

The intimidating tone of this letter defies belief. By 15 October 1996, Martin Bryant was already the victim of the most prejudicial pre-trial publicity in Australian history. Given that there is virtually nothing Scurr could have said to foster a more anti-Bryant climate than that which already existed, it would be

difficult to interpret this letter as a warning to her not to contribute in any way to the further demonisation of the accused. Virtually the only way Scurr could have "delayed" or "complicated" the trial was if she had thrown a spanner into the works by publicly declaring that the man she saw at the PAHS that day had *not* been Bryant—which we now know is her position—or if she had reported the existence of hitherto unsuspected accomplices.

This letter could therefore be regarded as a deliberate attempt by the prosecution to pervert the course of justice by ordering a witness to shut up. It is the authors of this letter—Damian Bugg, QC, and DPP clerk Nick Perks—who should therefore be under scrutiny.⁵

A further insight into the deviousness of the DPP's strategies derives from Bryant himself. On 3 October 1996, Bryant told Avery that he was not allowed to cut his hair, which by that stage was so long and unruly as to resemble dreadlocks:

Bryant: ...I can't have a haircut until after the Court case.

Avery: Who said that?

Bryant: I mentioned that to one of the officers.

Avery: Oh, did you?

Bryant: He said to me the other day, "You can't till after the Court case". I'll have to try and brush my hair a bit and keep it tidy.

Given that the only thing Bryant had in common with the Port Arthur gunman—other than being male and under 30—was his long blond hair, it is hardly surprising that he was denied a haircut. The DPP would have wanted Bryant to preserve the image of the "blond Rambo" in case his distinctive appearance became a factor during a trial. In any event, Avery's successful interventions in the case soon spared the DPP the immense trauma of orchestrating a trial, and when Bryant appeared in court in November he had in fact had a haircut.

The Avery transcripts

During October 1996, John Avery engaged in untold hours of "discussions" with Martin Bryant at Risdon Prison Hospital. Of the 20 meetings the pair had during that period, only the transcripts for parts of three have been made public. (Whether these transcripts are accurate verbatim records of the conversations must remain in doubt. Their accuracy clearly cannot be confirmed without having access to the original recordings.)

The first transcript, which preserves part of a conversation that took place on 3 October 1996, is from most points of view the most important; the second and third present a Bryant echoing the police tune like a trained parrot. How Avery got Bryant to the point that only five days later he would casually discuss the massacre as if he had really perpetrated it is a subject that is ignored in the published transcripts; only unedited transcripts of the complete conversations would provide the necessary clues.

Avery's major concern was apparently to persuade Bryant away from persisting with his "not guilty" pleas, as doing so would

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force a trial. As he told the *Bulletin* earlier this year (4 April 2006): "That was the hardest thing, because if Bryant wanted to be the ringmaster, it was going to be difficult to stop him." When Avery met Bryant on 3 October 1996, Bryant clearly still regarded himself as the "ringmaster" and was anticipating a trial in the not-too-distant future. Only five days later, according to the second transcript (8 October 1996), Bryant was apparently prepared to accept responsibility for literally any acts Avery wanted him to, no matter how heinous, meaning that a trial would no longer be necessary.

Two factors seem to have contributed to the transformation. The first was Avery's success in convincing Bryant that, without an alibi for his whereabouts at the time of the massacre, he had no viable defence strategy. "I can't magically find a defence that you were in Hong Kong or somewhere else," he told Bryant.

The second factor was Avery's use of "evidence" allegedly putting Bryant at Port Arthur on 28 April 1996. In addition to the old chestnut that lots of people saw Bryant at Port Arthur—"Heaps and heaps of people [say] you're it, you were there"—Bryant was given an undisclosed number of witness statements to study. Since his low IQ would have rendered him unable to consider the possibility that the statements he was given had been faked or were being presented to him in a misleading way—matters concerning the integrity of the evidence are, of course, normally the responsibility of the defence; but Avery was not seeking to defend Bryant, only persuade him to plead guilty—Bryant was left in the position of being forced to conclude that the man they referred to could only have been himself.

The Balasko video

Avery told Bryant that the evidence against him, in addition to the witness statements, included a video image: "...they've even got a photograph of you off the video walking round with a gun at Port Arthur shooting everyone. So you're pretty distinctive."

The video to which Avery was referring can only have been that allegedly made by American tourist James Balasko, which is a fake. It was reportedly filmed from behind a campervan as the gunman returned to his vehicle. However, the actual circumstances in which the video came to light are highly suspicious and militate strongly against its authenticity.

The official story is that Tasmania Police only became aware of the video's existence after a follow-up interview with Balasko on 1 August 1996, two weeks before its investigation concluded. To be sure, Balasko did not mention having filmed the gunman in the police witness statement he gave on the day following the massacre. The best explanation for Balasko's failure to mention the video on that occasion is, quite simply, that he hadn't made one. It is, after all, extremely improbable that he would have tried filming the gunman. Like most of the latter's other potential victims, the American's priority at that stage would have been to remain as inconspicuous as possible. Yet seven months later, Damian Bugg, QC, told the Supreme Court that Balasko had "placed himself in a position of danger" in order to make the film,

and furthermore that the risk had become a reality because the gunman noticed Balasko filming and fired a shot at him. Can we really believe that Balasko would have risked his life to make a video?

The two contradictory statements Balasko made regarding the circumstances in which he allegedly made the video are proof of the hoax. In his 29 April statement, he said that he ducked behind the campervan precisely because he saw the gunman take aim at him. He made no mention of either possessing a video camera or filming the gunman. In his 1 August statement, however, Balasko said: "As I was filming the shooter, he noticed me sticking out behind the van with my camera..." Not only are the two statements irreconcilable, but if Balasko really *had* made a video of the gunman it beggars belief that he would not have mentioned it to the police at the first opportunity. At this stage, the footage would have been of immense value to both the police and the Australian media. What's more, failing to declare the existence of footage pertaining to the commission of a crime would probably have constituted a felony.

There can be little doubt, therefore, that Balasko and Tasmania Police are lying and the video was actually concocted after the event. Balasko, who is rumoured to be an American CIA operative, would readily have agreed to help the police out by vouching for the spurious footage. (He also agreed to overdub some corny commentary for the video's first public presentation on Channel 9's *A Current Affair* on 24 November 1996.)

The spuriousness of the video becomes readily apparent upon close examination. Particularly suspicious is the fact that the images of the shooter captured in the video entirely lack facial detail. The facial area looks unnaturally washed out, which can only have been the result of digital tampering. The only discernible facial feature, in fact, is the outline of the actor's nose, which looks pert and feminine—in clear contrast to Bryant's extremely full nose.

In this regard, Ian McNiven, a critic of the official Port Arthur story, has made an interesting observation that towards the end of the footage: "...just as the gunman turns to face Balasko's camera showing the gunman's face, the head of

the gunman disappears having been clearly fuzzed out when the remainder [of] him is quite clear... The dazzling gold hair also has disappeared... This fact is clear evidence someone didn't want the gunman's face seen and the reason is because it wasn't that of Martin Bryant. What they wanted the public to see was the blond-haired man..."⁶

Abducted and drugged?

Now that it's been established that Bryant appears to have been persuaded to plead "guilty" to the massacre because he had no alibi, the question that arises is this: if Bryant was not guilty of the crimes at the PAHS, where was he when they took place? Why is it that no one can provide him with an alibi for his whereabouts between 12.50 pm and 1.50 pm on 28 April 1996? There are, as we should expect, very few clues as to what happened. All that can be said with confidence is that something

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happened to Bryant shortly after he stopped for coffee and a toasted sandwich at Nubeena, since that is when his pseudomemories began.

The baffling gap which appears in Bryant's recollections after Nubeena can probably best be explained by a scenario in which Bryant was intercepted, abducted and drugged into unconsciousness after he left Nubeena. If Bryant had any genuine memories of that period, he would probably have been far less suggestible than he turned out to be. Around lunchtime on 28 April, therefore, Bryant must have been administered a drug that literally knocked him out until he woke up, with his back on fire, in Seascope the following morning. (The lingering effects of the drug may explain why Bryant retained no memory of the bedside hearing on 30 April at which he was formally charged with the murder of Kate Scott.) Thus Bryant has no memory of where he was at the time of the massacre, because by then he was already unconscious; accordingly, no one can provide him with an alibi for his whereabouts in the crucial time period because by that stage he was already in police custody.

The interception and abduction of Martin Bryant can be deduced from a number of intriguing facts. First of all, in his 4 July police interrogation, Bryant lamented that one of the only two things he had done wrong was "being caught with not having a driver's licence". However, there is nothing on the public record about Bryant's apprehension for driving without a licence. This otherwise overlooked incident probably suggests that, after he left Nubeena, Bryant was intercepted by the police, the pretext for taking him into custody being his lack of a driver's licence. His Volvo would have been taken into custody at the same time. One of the policemen would have drugged Bryant—probably at Nubeena Police Station—and delivered the unconscious man to Seascope in the boot of his vehicle, while the other would have dropped Bryant's car off at the PAHS shortly before the massacre began.

This scenario presupposes that there were police in the area tailing him. Strikingly, three policemen were present in the area that day, any or all of whom could have been involved in the abduction effort. According to the official story, sometime around midday the only two policemen on the Tasman Peninsula, Constable Paul Hyland of Nubeena Police Station and Garry Whittle of Dunalley Police Station, were summoned away to a remote location at Saltwater River—the farthest point on the peninsula—by an anonymous caller reporting a large stash of heroin. About an hour later, the policemen allegedly rang in to report that the call had been a hoax and that nothing had been found at Saltwater River other than a sample of ordinary soap powder.

Although it is generally assumed that the perpetrators of the massacre decoyed the two policemen to this remote location in order to retard the police response to the

massacre, the story itself could well be bogus and have been invented to provide an alibi for their doings in the crucial hours beforehand. At the time the two policemen were allegedly decoyed on a wild goose chase, they could well have been actually engaged in abducting Martin Bryant and commandeering his Volvo.

A third policeman, Constable Chris Iles from Sorell Police Station, was also present in the area at the time of the massacre. According to eyewitness Kyle Spruce, Iles appeared in front of Port Arthur General Store within a minute or two of the gunman's departure. He then sped off towards Seascope. No explanation has ever been given for Iles being out of his own district that afternoon, just as there has been no explanation for what he did after he reached Seascope, which he would have done within five or 10 minutes.

The scenario described above would account for several interesting circumstances:

(1) Bryant told his interrogators that while surfing at Roaring Beach he noticed two people bodysurfing in short wetsuits at the other end of the beach. It is interesting that Bryant should recall such a trivial detail. That he chose to mention it may indicate that he assigned the men some significance—significance which has been expunged from the interrogation transcript. Could the men have been Hyland and Whittle? If so, how did they know they could begin tailing Bryant there? Did Bryant's girlfriend

Petra Wilmott, after she left his house that morning, alert them to the fact that Bryant planned to go surfing at Roaring Beach?

(2) According to Michael Beekman and Rebecca McKenna—two persons who had been sitting near the gunman on the front deck area of the Broad Arrow Café—the Port Arthur gunman was watching the carpark anxiously in the period between about 1.10 and 1.15 pm. According to PAHS employee Aileen Kingston, a yellow Volvo arrived at the Port Arthur toll gate at around the same time. The vehicle would therefore have entered the Port

Did Bryant's girlfriend Petra Wilmott, after she left his house that morning, alert them to the fact that Bryant planned to go surfing at Roaring Beach?



Petra Wilmott, girlfriend of Martin Bryant in the two months before the massacre.

Arthur carpark a minute or two later. After a few minutes of inane chatter, the gunman suddenly rose from his table on the front deck and entered the café proper. Chronologically, the two events are so closely tied that they must represent cause and effect. The Volvo's arrival in the carpark appears to have been a signal to the gunman that the massacre was to go ahead as planned. (The use of such a signalling device seems obvious enough when you consider that the decision as to whether the massacre was to go ahead would have depended on whether Bryant, the designated patsy, had successfully been apprehended. It wouldn't have been acceptable to have allowed Bryant to be seen elsewhere at the time of the massacre, and his car also needed to be on hand for the gunman to use as an escape vehicle.)

(3) At around 1.50 pm, in circumstances that remain extremely obscure, two things seem to have happened at Seascope. A hostage was taken out of the boot of a vehicle and taken inside Seascope Cottage. At more or less the same time, an explosion occurred which destroyed the BMW that had been hijacked by the gunman. It is entirely possible that the hostage who was taken by the gunman—Glenn Pears—was still inside the boot of the vehicle when it ignited, and that the hostage who was taken inside Seascope Cottage was none other than Martin Bryant. In short, the gunman may have taken Glenn Pears hostage for no other reason than to provide a cover story for witness sightings of a hostage being bundled into Seascope. Although the official story is that Pears's body was found inside Seascope, only the officers who first opened the BMW's boot after the siege was over the following morning—and the media were not allowed to visit the location until 11.00 am, giving the police a period of approximately two hours in which to tamper with the crime scene—would be in a position to know the truth.

Where are the witnesses?

All Port Arthur Massacre (PAM) researchers face essentially the same obstacle when they seek to show that the official narrative cannot be true. If the official story is not true, people ask, then why haven't eyewitnesses come forward to denounce it as a hoax and tell us what they saw? In my opinion, it is impossible to answer this question satisfactorily without presenting an overarching theory of the case.

In this three-part article I have concerned myself with only a part of the whole: the issue of Bryant's framing. A great many aspects of the case have not been dealt with for reasons of space, and these aspects include evidence that would convince anyone that the massacre involved elements of the Australian federal government. In the wake of John Howard's emergence as opposition leader in January 1995 and police forensic expert Sergeant Gerard Dutton's move from Sydney to Hobart soon afterwards, the year preceding the events of 28 April 1996 also saw a staggering number of personnel changes within the Tasmanian state government, including Premier Ray Groom's baffling exchange of the state's top job for a swag of ministerial portfolios six weeks before the massacre. Also, in June 1995,

owner Jim Laycock sold the Broad Arrow Café to the Tasmanian government. This, in an age of privatisation, seems to have been an extremely unusual case of acquisition by government of the kind of business normally considered the preserve of private enterprise. The government, which took over the building on 1 July 1995, then proceeded to refurbish it—presumably to create the perfect environment for the kind of massacre being planned. The work included the insertion of a new door to the rear of the building—the very door which infamously failed to operate on the day of the massacre.

A particularly damning piece of evidence is the fact that in 1995 the Tasmanian government ordered a mortuary vehicle that was capable of carrying 16 bodies at once.⁷ It is impossible to account for the government's decision to purchase such a vehicle when the state—which had been the most peaceful in Australia for over a hundred years—had an average murder rate of one every two months. No other state, not even New South Wales and Victoria—the states in which all previous gun rampages had occurred—possessed a vehicle with such substantial capacity. So why did the Tasmanian government decide it needed such a vehicle in 1995? And why did it subsequently decide that the vehicle, having proved its worth at Port Arthur in 1996, would not be needed in future and, in September 1998, offer it for sale? Someone with remarkable abilities of prediction seems to have been steering the course of Tasmanian government policy in the 1990s.

The mortuary ambulance remains just one small piece of the puzzle. It takes looking at only a few such pieces before it becomes impossible to avoid the conclusion that the massacre had to have been organised by elements within the Tasmanian government (albeit presumably at the instigation of the federal government). It is only as a government conspiracy that the carnage makes any sense.

The most important clue perhaps is that, when the shooting began at 1.27 pm that day, the Broad Arrow Café was crowded with in excess of 60 people. The café was "chockers" (cramped full), to quote witness Michael Beekman. This is because, in addition to the regular numbers of tourists, there was a sizeable

contingent of members of the Australian security (police/military) and intelligence establishments—including many individuals who appear to have been agents of covert government organisations such as ASIO and the even more secretive ASIS.

Among the dead, there is considerable certainty regarding the intelligence affiliations of Tony Kistan, Andrew Mills and Anthony Nightingale.⁸ Of the survivors, those who have been tentatively identified as spooks include Rob Atkins, Karen Atkins, Lyn Beavis, Justin Noble and Hans Overbeeke. Several army personnel were present, including RAF veteran Graham Collyer, Vietnam veteran John Godfrey and Major Sandra Vanderpeer. Intelligence agents from abroad may also have been involved. In addition to two suspicious Americans—James Balasko, whose role in the production of a fake video was mentioned above, and gun-control advocate Dennis Olson—there is the intriguing case of a Taiwanese man injured in the shooting who would not tell

The key to understanding the massacre is thus that it contained at its heart a "double-cross" mechanism enabling it to eliminate a substantial part of the personnel who had actually been involved in planning it.

anyone his name, and whose identity in fact has been suppressed by the DPP, even to the point that Bugg referred to an "Asian gentleman" rather than a "Taiwanese gentleman".⁹ It appears that planning for the massacre drew upon the expertise of intelligence agents from around the world.

The most plausible explanation for the presence of so many agents in the Broad Arrow Café at the same time is that their work had brought them there: their job was to pose as members of the public and help manage the aftermath of the slaughter. Some of them may have been tasked with scooping up evidence afterwards; others may have been coached to talk to the press, perhaps to offer detailed descriptions of a gunman who would, at least in their accounts, bear an uncanny resemblance to Martin Bryant and to provide other sundry pieces of disinformation. Other operatives may have been present only because they wanted to see for themselves how everything went down, perhaps out of idle curiosity or perhaps out of "career development" motives.

Obviously, they cannot have expected the massacre to take place inside the café. The expectation seems to have been that it would be carried out a short distance away, on the Isle of the Dead. At least four people—Rob Atkins, Michael Beekman, Gaye Lynd and Rebecca McKenna—claimed to have heard the gunman make remarks about going to the Isle of the Dead to kill wasps.¹⁰ After the shootings, the idea that the gunman's original destination was the Isle of the Dead was expressed by several people including PAHS employee Ian Kingston and Assistant Police Commissioner Lupo Prins.

Prins told the Hobart *Mercury* (31 December 1996): "At one stage we thought he was trying to get on a boat which a lot of people were on, to go to the Isle of the Dead. Had he got on the vessel he could have shot everybody on board, so the potential was there for it to be a lot worse than it was."

I have always been highly sceptical about the idea that the police were able to read the gunman's mind—to claim to know what he intended to do—when there are no indications, other than a few vague references to the island, that he planned to do anything other than what he finally did do. What we are supposed to believe, apparently, is that the gunman only entered the Broad Arrow Café after he had learned that the Bundeena ferry service was taking tourists out to the Isle of the Dead at 2.00 pm that day, not at 1.30 pm as he had supposed. (The ferry timetable had been changed two weeks earlier.) This theory has the advantage of explaining why a café brimming with intelligence agents became the target. Unfortunately, the theory also asks us to accept two highly unlikely things: (1) that the gunman (or anyone working with him) never bothered to check the ferry timetable carefully before he came up with his plan; and (2) that at more or less the last minute the gunman, on his own initiative, made a radical change of plan and fixed on the café as the location, even though it was "chockers" with agents involved in the exact same plot.

Yet according to Rebecca McKenna's witness statement, the gunman went from chatting idly about European wasps to entering the café in the space of a few minutes. As far as I can tell, nothing significant happened in the interval—although the gunman was watching the carpark anxiously and must have had a reason for being fixated on that area. It is possible, therefore,

although I think not highly likely, that someone signalled to him from the carpark that the café, rather than the Isle of the Dead, was to become the massacre scene. (As you'll already have read, my view is that what he observed was, rather, the delivery of Martin Bryant's Volvo to the carpark, and that the presence of the *real* Bryant vehicle was the signal for the massacre to begin.)

I part ways with most other PAM conspiracy researchers, therefore, when I reject the theory of the Homer Simpson–like gunman so daft as to forget to check the ferry timetable ahead of time (doh!) and argue that the eventual outcome was far from being an accident: the gunman was a skilled professional who did exactly what he had been trained to do. The view that the massacre went off according to plan is buttressed by the footage that was released to the media of faked images of the gunman's blue sports bag sitting on top of a table inside the entirely pristine café. Referring to a frame taken from the footage that appears on his website, Ian McNiven writes that since it is "inconceivable" that the police "would have cleaned up the crime scene to take this picture", it must have been taken *before* the massacre—perhaps, I

would suggest, before the café opened for business that day.¹¹ This seems strong evidence that the massacre unfolded in the café exactly as planned.

The key to understanding the massacre is thus that it contained at its heart a "double-cross" mechanism enabling it to eliminate a substantial part of the personnel who had actually been involved in planning it. It is certainly hard not to believe that Anthony Nightingale was involved in the plot: as soon as the shooting started, he leapt up from his seat to cry out, "No, no, not here!" Clearly, Nightingale knew, or *thought he knew*, where the massacre was supposed to

take place. Yet the gunman fired on regardless.

The best answer, therefore, to the question of why no survivors have come forward is that many, if not most, were intelligence operatives. Those who knew about the massacre were expecting to be able to observe it from a safe distance. Those at the highest levels of the plot had in mind a quite different development: the massacre would lead to the elimination of most of the people who knew anything about it. This was easily done—only a handful needed to know that the carnage would really take place inside the café—and would ensure that afterwards there were very few left who actually knew what had happened and so there could be few leaks. The survivors, having been tricked in this way, would have been left in an extremely awkward position. They could hardly have gone public with what they knew, for to do so would oblige them to admit that they had been involved in a plot to murder the tourists on the Isle of the Dead.

If my theory is correct, there is a silver lining to the horrendous dark cloud that was the Port Arthur Massacre. At least some of the dead had themselves been party to a conspiracy to murder dozens of innocent people. Maybe there is some justice in their becoming victims of their own planning.

Author's note:

Some transcript extracts used in this article have been slightly modified in the interests of readability.

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The most plausible explanation for the presence of so many intelligence agents in the Broad Arrow Café at the same time is that their work had brought them there.

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Endnotes

1. McDonald, Noel, *A Presentation of the Port Arthur Incident*, 2001, p. 145.
2. See <http://home.overflow.net.au/~nedwood/bryant3.html>.
3. The transcripts are available by following the link to Interview 1 (3 October 1996): <http://bulletin.ninemsn.com.au/bulletin/site/articleIDs401A8F3AB6442877CA25713D0075FA08>. According to Julie-Anne Davies ("Making of a monster", *Bulletin*, 4 April 2006), Avery conducted 20 conversations with Bryant and possesses hours of tapes. According to Davies, Bryant refused to allow his former lawyer to release them. If true, this makes it seem most unlikely that Bryant gave Avery permission for the release of the three transcripts published by the *Bulletin*. If Avery felt free to disregard Bryant's wishes in the case of three transcripts, it is hard to see what prevents him from releasing them all. Admittedly, Avery denies having given the transcripts to the *Bulletin*; however, I must admit to not believing him. Avery was disbarred in early 2006, some say as a consequence of having released the transcripts to the *Bulletin*. However, the official explanation appears to be that he was disbarred on account of a financial irregularity. The matter cannot be clarified by contacting the Law

Society of Tasmania—the organisation that brought the action to disbar Avery—as I sought to do between June and August 2006. The Law Society stonewalled me by simply referring me to a website publishing all the decisions of the Tasmanian Supreme Court. However, the Avery decision was not available on the website to which I was referred (http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/tas/supreme_ct/recent-cases.html) and is in fact still not available there today (as at the beginning of September). When I wrote back to the Law Society to point out the omission, I was glibly informed that "Some judgments seem to take some time before being posted on the web". At this stage, I strongly doubt that it will ever appear.
4. Quoted in McDonald, *ibid.*, p. 264.
5. In fact, Bugg has done very well out of Port Arthur. On 19 October 1996, the Hobart *Mercury* revealed that during the year Bugg's income had risen from his regular annual salary of A\$107,638 to around \$221,836, including the value of a "private-plated car". Soon afterwards, Bugg was promoted to Federal Director of Public Prosecutions.
6. See <http://www.shootersnews.addr.com/snpsaheadlessgunman.html>.
7. See <http://shootersnews.addr.com/snpsamorgtruck.html>.
8. Anthony Nightingale, who was ostensibly an employee of the Commonwealth Bank at Noble

Park, Victoria, is a particularly interesting case. According to one researcher, Nightingale's beneficiary received a six-figure payout from his employer in compensation for his death—a fact that implies that, far from being on holiday, he was on active duty at the time.
9. McDonald, *ibid.*, pp. 185, 225.
10. Overseas readers should know that European wasps, which were introduced to Tasmania in 1959, are attracted to picnic areas, barbecues and schoolyards by sweet foods and meats. They are a particular nuisance at the PAHS during the warmer months of the year.
11. See <http://shootersnews.addr.com/snpsportsbag2.html>.

About the Author:

Carl Wernerhoff is the pseudonym for a Sydney-based conspiracy researcher with a particular interest in the history of political assassinations and orchestrated tragedies such as the Port Arthur and Columbine massacres. He has a PhD in History and currently works as a teacher. His recently released e-book, *What's Going On? A Critical Study of the Port Arthur Massacre*, can be downloaded (free of charge) from <http://www.ourmedia.org/user/95839>.

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